

THE SECOND DAG HAMMARSKJÖLD LECTURE

Between Sovereignty and Globalisation

Where does the United Nations fit in?

Brian Urquhart

Uppsala 2000

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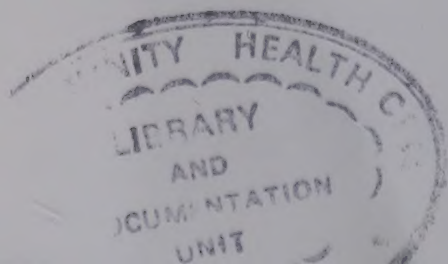
Uppsala 2000

This is the slightly revised text of the second Dag Hammarskjöld Lecture given by Sir Brian Urquhart, Former Under Secretary-General for Special Political Affairs, United Nations, at Uppsala University on 25 February 2000.

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PREFACE

The role of the United Nations in steering a course between sovereignty and globalisation was the very challenging theme of Brian Urquhart's Dag Hammarskjöld Lecture, given in the Main Hall of Uppsala University to a capacity audience in late February 2000.

Reflecting on the recent statement by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, that 'State sovereignty, in its most basic sense, is being redefined by the forces of globalisation and international cooperation', Brian Urquhart argued that 'wider rules of conduct, and new ways of governance and management' needed to be evolved: changes that would be bound to encounter considerable opposition from nation states. He reminded the audience that 'the United Nations is still fundamentally a power-oriented organisation'.

Brian Urquhart also pointed out that the concept of globalisation, so popular with the western media, was already encountering much opposition from a variety of groups and interests throughout the world. There remain many unanswered questions: as to whether, for example, the Internet brings people together or isolates them, or whether global consumerism is destroying diversity and identity or reviving national and ethnic feelings; overall, it is clear, however, that 'globalisation in its present form deepens already serious existing inequalities'. In Brian Urquhart's view, it is essential to find a way of distributing the benefits of globalisation much more fairly, and such a task is a very appropriate one for the United Nations to fulfil. 'If globalisation is not to have an ultimately destabilising, even explosive, effect', he argued, 'it must be shared worldwide to a much greater extent than at present.' To come to grips with the enormous challenges that globalisation poses, new and enterprising initiatives and arrangements are necessary, indeed indispensable. The

only way to proceed is to create broad alliances between all the actors concerned. 'The UN has taken the lead in many of the great historic issues of our time', Brian Urquhart concluded, 'and its record is far more impressive than is generally appreciated. With the surging phenomenon of globalisation and the shrinking of the powers of the nation state, it should take the lead again.'

Few people could have been better suited to speak about the United Nations than Brian Urquhart for the simple reason that few people have been more closely associated with the organisation than he has. Immediately after the end of World War II he joined the UN as one of its very first employees. For 41 years, between 1945 and 1986, he worked closely with each of the first five Secretaries-General and, in 1974, succeeded Ralph Bunche as Under Secretary-General for Special Political Affairs, a post he held for 12 years. He has been a central figure behind UN peace-keeping and peace-making activities, playing key roles in the UN's involvement in Lebanon, Palestine and Namibia and participating in peace-keeping activities in the Congo, Cyprus and Kashmir. Since retiring from the organisation, he has, perhaps with more knowledge and authority than anybody else, continued to argue passionately for the future of the United Nations as a vigorous organisation able to promote global peace and justice.

Brian Urquhart has continued to be very active, since leaving the United Nations, as a participant in the debate on international issues. Following his highly regarded biography of Dag Hammarskjöld, published in 1972, he has written an excellent book on Ralph Bunche, as well as an exciting autobiography on his life in peace and war. Together with the late Erskine Childers he has also produced four studies of the reform of the United Nations, published jointly by the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation and the Ford Foundation. He is a regular contributor to *The New York Review of Books*, where he writes on international affairs, particularly UN matters. (A short bibliography of Brian Urquhart's writings can be found at the end of this publication.)

It was an easy task for the organising committee of the Dag Hammarskjöld Lecture to select the speaker this time, among the many nominations made. The guidelines used in the selection process state that 'the privilege of delivering the Lecture is offered to a person who has promoted, in action and spirit, the values that inspired Dag Hammarskjöld as Secretary-General of the United Nations and generally in his life: compassion, humanism and commitment to international solidarity and cooperation.' Brian Urquhart fulfils these criteria to a remarkable degree.

The Dag Hammarskjöld Lecture has been jointly instituted by the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation and Uppsala University in memory of the second Secretary-General of the United Nations. Uppsala University has also created, especially for this occasion, a Dag Hammarskjöld Medal, which is awarded to the person giving the lecture. As was the case when the first lecture was given in October 1998 by Mrs Mary Robinson, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the full University Main Hall included a large proportion of students and young people when Brian Urquhart spoke. This augurs very well for the continuing relevance of the concerns that he raised, and we look forward to future lectures with great confidence.

The Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation and Uppsala University are proud to publish the text of the lecture, which Brian Urquhart has slightly revised for publication.

Lars Anell
Chairperson
Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation

Bo Sundqvist
Vice-Chancellor
Uppsala University



Photo: Tommy Westberg

*Brian Urquhart
delivering the second Dag Hammarskjöld Lecture,
Uppsala University Main Hall*

BETWEEN SOVEREIGNTY AND GLOBALISATION

WHERE DOES THE UNITED NATIONS FIT IN?

By Brian Urquhart

This is a moving occasion for me. It is a great honour to give the second Dag Hammarskjöld Memorial Lecture here in Uppsala. I have long been associated with the Foundation, which bears Hammarskjöld's name and which, with the University of Uppsala, sponsors this lecture. Dag Hammarskjöld would have been delighted with the very effective and innovative work the Foundation does, especially in two areas that greatly concerned him—international organisation and the problems of developing countries. Last year the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation lost a much-loved, founder member of its Board, Torgny Segerstedt. His great wisdom, his incisive mind, and his humour were, to me at any rate, one of the glories of Uppsala.

Dag Hammarskjöld's closest colleague at the United Nations, the Nobel Peace Laureate, Ralph Bunche, did not give praise often or easily. Bunche wrote of Dag Hammarskjöld: 'He was the most remarkable man I have ever seen or worked with. I learned more from him than from any other man.' Hammarskjöld was a true son of Uppsala, a man, as Hammarskjöld wrote of the great naturalist Linnaeus, 'whose disciples were sent to the four corners of the earth'. He was an intellectual in action, a brilliant leader of unique far-sightedness, integrity and courage. Hammarskjöld would certainly have had

much to say about the present conjuncture of national sovereignty and globalisation, and what the United Nations ought to be doing about it.

Human life and society are not, thank God, precise or predictable. They abound in advances and withdrawals, ups and downs, contradictions and frustrations, checks and balances. In the same way, political, social and economic trends often give rise to their opposites—capitalism gave birth to communism, conservatives stimulate socialists and vice versa, free trade spawns protectionism. The United Nations, the original global organisation, seems to bring out the forces of nationalism in many of its member states. Indeed the organisation is almost the last bastion of a concept of national sovereignty that is in retreat almost everywhere else. National sovereignty is frequently invoked at the UN as a reason for *not* taking actions that would otherwise be regarded as desirable.

In Washington, as in many other capitals, nationalists oppose, with great success, essential elements of a more effective UN—a rapid reaction force under the Security Council, the strengthening of the Secretary-General's powers of initiative, or alternative sources of financing. The United States has even, for many years, failed to pay its Charter-based assessments to the organisation's budget. In the developing world there is also strong resistance to strengthening the UN in some areas—humanitarian intervention, for example, or some environmental measures. None of this, of course, prevents governments from making urgent calls for UN action when disaster strikes.

A dynamic Secretary-General also tends to arouse the guardians of national sovereignty. Dag Hammarskjöld made the UN a force in its own right in critical international situations—emergencies such as the 17 American air-men imprisoned by China in 1954; the 1956 Suez crisis; or chaos in the Congo in 1960. More recently, the United Nations has played a key transi-

tional role in many places—Cambodia, Namibia, Haiti or Mozambique, for example, and most recently in Kosovo and East Timor. Hammarskjöld's dynamism made many powerful governments nervous at various times, and in the end it was altogether too much for hard-core nationalists like Charles de Gaulle and Nikita Khrushchev, who both refused to deal with him.

Forty years later, another dynamic and forthright Secretary-General—with close personal ties to Sweden, incidentally—is facing the barricades thrown up by the guardians of national sovereignty. Kofi Annan is not afraid to speak out on delicate political issues or human rights, or to lead, regardless of the consequences, when others hesitate. All the same, this is a puzzling and murky period at the UN.

Last September, doubtless with the tragedy of Rwanda in mind, Annan made an impassioned plea to the UN General Assembly for UN intervention in cases of gross abuses of human rights. 'From Sierra Leone,' he said, 'to the Sudan to Angola to the Balkans to Cambodia and to Afghanistan, there are a great number of peoples who need more than just words of sympathy from the international community. They need a real and sustained commitment to help end their cycles of violence, and launch them on a safe passage to prosperity.' The general reaction was extremely cautious and largely negative and reasserted respect of national sovereignty as the paramount consideration. Only a small minority rallied to the Swedish position—supporting the Secretary-General's statement—that the collective conscience of mankind requires us to act in such cases.

In January, Senator Jesse Helms, the chairman of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, told the UN Security Council that 'the American people will not accept the authority of any supranational institution as being greater than the sovereign right of Americans to decide how to act in their own

interest both at home and abroad...,’ and that any other idea would lead to the withdrawal of the United States from the UN. Helms did not say whether this doctrine should apply to other sovereign states—Iraq or Serbia, for example. Evidently some states are more sovereign than others. The reaction at the UN to Helms, who wields an extraordinary influence on United States foreign policy, was civil and restrained, but his words were a formidable reassertion of the paramountcy of national sovereignty from a spokesman of the UN’s most powerful member.

In the same month the President of the Security Council, Ambassador Richard Holbrooke of the United States, announced that during his presidency the problems of Africa would take precedence on the Council’s agenda. As a starter he had the Council discuss the epidemic of AIDS in Africa as a threat to the continent’s stability. This was a remarkable innovation. Many African heads of state attended this series of meetings of the Security Council. They blamed the UN for not saving Rwanda from genocide and for ‘foot-dragging’ on other African problems, especially in the Congo. This episode highlights, among other things, one of the most poignant dilemmas of the UN. Admittedly the failure of the Security Council to take action when the genocide in Rwanda started was deplorable. But suppose the UN *had* decided to intervene when the first hint of the genocide plan reached New York, three months before the event itself. Would Rwanda, and its African neighbours, have welcomed UN preventive intervention at that time? Would the Security Council, mindful of the precedent it would create, have voted for such a preventive intervention? It seems extremely unlikely. The UN is usually able to take action only after disaster has struck.

Although, in the optimistic days of ‘assertive multilateralism’ in the early 1990s, it was quite a popular notion, very few governments now support the

idea of a UN rapid reaction force which would be trained, ready, and prepared to take the necessary risks to carry out effective and immediate UN intervention. Such a spearhead force might have been invaluable in emergencies like Rwanda, but it is further than ever from becoming a reality. Instead the only substantial preparation for peace-keeping emergencies is the 'standby arrangements' with governments for the provision of peace-keeping contingents. These arrangements have neither the reliability—not a single one could be activated for Rwanda—nor the immediate availability that are necessary to prevent an emergency situation from getting out of hand. Nor do they provide a coherent force at the outset. Thus it seems that for the moment the UN is condemned to amateur and improvised reactions—almost always too little and too late. Such self-imposed ineffectiveness progressively saps the world's confidence in the organisation.

The concept of national sovereignty, which Vaclav Havel recently called a 'dangerous anachronism', is itself relatively recent. Like globalisation, it was a result partly of technological advance—the printing press, moveable type and the spread of literacy; and, also like globalisation, because expanding commerce demanded larger trading areas than the cities and principalities of feudal Europe afforded. Unfortunately the concept of national sovereignty, in the guise of extreme nationalism, led to many wars, and finally to the two world wars.

The United Nations is supposed to enshrine the lessons learned from this catastrophic evolution. It was clear long ago, except to a small Stone Age and Flat Earth minority, that full national independence and isolation are no longer possible for any state. As Kofi Annan told the General Assembly: 'State sovereignty, in its most basic sense, is being redefined by the forces of globalisation and international cooperation.' It follows that wider rules of conduct,

and new ways of governance and management have to be evolved. This evolution will certainly encounter much opposition. It is enough to remember that in the past 12 months international action on East Timor and Chechnya—or, in the case of Chechnya, inaction—were made dependent on the consent of the government most concerned. The United Nations is still fundamentally a power-oriented organisation.

Globalisation is now a favourite topic in the media, and it is already arousing anxiety, suspicion, and opposition, especially in the developing world. Preoccupation with the political, economic and social effects of globalisation was a major theme of the 1999 general debate in the UN General Assembly. The demonstrations in Seattle against the World Trade Organization were partly an expression of this mood. In some places, young people are beginning to see the global economy as the new enemy—faceless, ruthless, enormously powerful, not accountable, and non-transparent. Recently the 250,000 students of the Autonomous National University in Mexico went on strike, partly in protest against the global economy and free trade. These events may well be the beginning of a more general and organised opposition.

Of course globalisation is not a new concept. The United Nations, the only global political organisation, has been concerned with global problems for more than 30 years. The first of the great UN conferences on global problems—on the environment—took place here in Sweden in 1972. But the current wave of *economic* globalisation is changing how we live and how we shall have to manage our affairs. It needs special and urgent attention.

In our current preoccupation with financial and market globalisation, it is well to remember that global problems are precisely what the UN was set up to deal with. International peace and security has been a global concern since 1945, and there is an international order of sorts, based on the UN Charter

and the Security Council. It is not always effective, but it is established and recognised. At present the controversy is over the internationalisation of human rights, that is to say, *human* security. In spite of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and all the conventions, and although there is now a strong and growing worldwide popular movement for human rights, there is still no solid legal or political basis for international human rights intervention, and, as I noted earlier, there is much resistance to the idea. Even so, the detention in England of General Pinochet, or NATO's war on Serbia over Kosovo, would have been inconceivable only a few years ago. There are War Crimes Tribunals for former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, an effort to have international participation in the tribunal in Cambodia that will judge the Khmer Rouge, and plans to set up an International Criminal Court. So there is considerable, if haphazard, progress on a global framework for human security.

A vast and growing body of international law, most of it promulgated through the United Nations system, puts restraints on sovereign states in many areas of human activity—environment, communications, nuclear proliferation, drugs, use of the oceans, aviation and shipping, health, to name only a few. This framework is largely taken for granted. There is, however, no paramount international authority to *enforce* international law, except when, very occasionally, the Security Council deals with acts of aggression under Chapter VII of the Charter, as in the overturning of Iraq's conquest of Kuwait.

If globalisation comes to be perceived as a largely economic phenomenon, it could create a serious hazard for the future stability and peace of the world. Market forces, especially on the present global scale, create vast and rapid changes, not always for the better, in the lives of hundreds of millions of people who have no say whatever in what is happening. At present the development of an equitable social and political context for economic globalisa-

tion lags far behind the growth of the global market. In fact, governments sometimes seem to have fallen so far behind economic forces as to be only peripheral players in the great global circus.

However, it is possible that the obvious need for international action to regulate the effects of economic globalisation on the future of life on our planet may actually *extend* the influence of governments. If these effects are to be beneficial, governments, often working through international organisations, will have a literally vital role to play. There are already many areas apart from human rights, such as global warming and climate change, the preservation of the oceans—including the fish supply, the husbanding of water resources and the problems of island states—or the campaign against desertification or against land mines, where intergovernmental cooperation is absolutely essential to success. As the Canadian writer and public servant Gordon Smith has recently put it: 'Sovereignty is not what it used to be. It is more. It is also less.'

Of course, no one knows the ultimate consequences of globalisation any more than they knew the consequences of the Industrial Revolution at the beginning of the 19th Century. Does the Internet bring people together, or does it isolate them? Is consumerism destroying identity and diversity, or is it reviving national and ethnic feeling? One thing, however, is certain. Globalisation in its present form deepens already serious existing inequalities. It is essential therefore to find ways better to distribute its benefits. This is where governments in the United Nations system come in, or should do. If globalisation is not to have an ultimately destabilising, even explosive, effect, it must be shared worldwide to a much greater extent than at present. This means creating a political and social as well as an economic context for it. This may well require a new arrangement in which the private sector, the great

transnational corporations that are now the main actors and beneficiaries of globalisation, and governments in international organisations share responsibility for developing the rules and institutions that ensure that globalisation will be a global blessing, not a curse.

It is often said that computers, telecommunications, and the Internet are the beginning of a single global nervous system. The trouble, as Sir Jeremy Greenstock, the British ambassador to the UN, pointed out in a recent lecture at Yale, is that the vast majority are excluded from this revolutionary change. Ninety per cent of the world's people have no access to computers. More than half have never even made or received a telephone call.

The recent millennium and Y2K extravaganza was a striking example of the elite quality of technological globalisation. Christians constitute slightly less than one third of the world's people.

Nonetheless, our predominant technological society was able to impose the 2000th birthday of the founder of Christianity as a planetary turning point, and the Y2K problem as a potential global disaster. The large majority of the world's people worship different gods with different calendars. Most of them also have different, and more mundane, priorities than Y2K—such as where the next meal is coming from, or how to find safe water to drink.

In present conditions the gap between rich and poor seems doomed to increase faster because of globalisation. Microsoft's capitalisation is larger than the combined Gross Domestic Product of the one hundred smallest nations, over half the nations of the world. We know all too well how politically explosive such glaring contrasts can become, especially in the age of instant global communication.

Like capitalism and colonialism before it, globalisation at present means great prosperity for the few and continuing inequality and poverty for the

many. Many people, including Kofi Annan and a number of non-governmental organisations, have pointed this out, and there is already a widespread awareness of this aspect of globalisation. If we pride ourselves on a higher sense of international responsibility than our forefathers, it should be possible to mount a great effort to mitigate the potentially destructive aspects of globalisation by ensuring that its potentially enormous benefits can be shared. Such an effort would require new combinations of actors—the private sector, governments, international organisations, intellectuals, non-governmental organisations and the media. In the 1998 Davos meeting Kofi Annan proposed a Global Compact between business and the United Nations. He asked the private sector to act, within its different spheres of influence, according to internationally accepted standards in the areas of human rights, labour standards and the environment, and offered the services of the relevant parts of the UN system to help them to do so. It should be possible to build on this kind of initiative.

The communications revolution, which made economic globalisation possible, also provides, through the Internet, a new, quick and inexpensive way for concerned people and organisations to form worldwide coalitions and make themselves heard. Let us hope that both the private sector and governments will listen. If they do, the UN system could provide both a catalyst and meeting place for dealing with a problem with huge potential consequences for the human race.

Our worst problems are now shared, and often global, problems. They can only be solved by international cooperation and better international management. Sound solutions require accountability, transparency and representation of all the groups of people affected. Of course these requirements will

complicate the process, just as democracy complicates the process of government. Tyranny or oligarchy are much simpler, but common sense and good governance demand that people be represented in the discussion of the great changes that will dominate their lives.

Six years ago, in a publication of the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, the late Erskine Childers and I urged the importance of greater transparency in various international dealings, including the selection of UN leaders. It was, predictably, not a very popular suggestion, not least because it was believed that it would complicate life for the member governments. We also suggested that the time would come when the actual peoples of the world, who at present have no direct representation at the United Nations, should be represented, as the European Community's people are represented, in a directly elected people's assembly or parliament, parallel to the intergovernmental UN General Assembly. This idea was even less popular.

All political development is a result of the need for rules to govern human interactions. The UN has already provided many elements of a rule-based international system. It was tackling global problems decades before the word 'globalisation' was coined. The benign development of globalisation may be its greatest challenge yet.

In 1960 Dag Hammarskjöld wrote: 'Working at the edge of the development of human society is to work on the brink of the unknown. Much of what is done will one day prove to be of little avail. That is no excuse for the failure to act in accordance with our best understanding, in recognition of its limits, but with faith in the ultimate result of the creative evolution in which it is our privilege to cooperate.' There is always a challenge ahead, an historic opportunity to be grasped. There is also the certainty that our children will

pay the price if we fail to grasp it. There is a disastrous human tendency to be lulled by peaceful and prosperous times into doing nothing about great problems that still seem comfortably far off. It would be a fatal mistake to evade or ignore the potential problems of globalisation just because they seem so vast and complex and are still largely in the future.

It is not a matter of knowing all the answers. Lunatic asylums are full of people who know all the answers. It is a matter of asking the right questions and then working together, no matter how long it takes, to find and agree on the best answers. The UN has taken the lead in many of the great historic issues of our time, and its record is far more impressive than is generally appreciated. With the surging phenomenon of globalisation and the shrinking of the powers of the nation state, it should take the lead again.

Books by Brian Urquhart

Hammar skjöld, W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York, 1994,
ISBN 0-393-31253-4 (originally published by Alfred A Knopf, New York, 1972).

A Life in Peace and War, W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York, 1991,
ISBN 0-393-30771-9 (autobiography, originally published by Harper & Row, New York, 1987).

Ralph Bunche—An American Life, W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York, 1998,
ISBN 0-393-03527-1, 0-393-31859-1 (pbk), (originally published by W.W. Norton, New York, 1993).

Studies by Brian Urquhart, published jointly by the Dag Hammar skjöld Foundation and the Ford Foundation:

Copies may be obtained from the Dag Hammar skjöld Foundation, Övre Slottsgatan 2, S-753 10 Uppsala, Sweden;
e-mail: secretariat@dhf.uu.se

'A World in Need of Leadership: Tomorrow's United Nations', together with Erskine Childers, *Development Dialogue* 1990:1-2. Out of stock.
Available in French and Spanish.

'Towards a More Effective United Nations', together with Erskine Childers, *Development Dialogue* 1991:1-2.

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Articles by Brian Urquhart in *The New York Review of Books*:

These articles can be downloaded from <http://www.nybooks.com/nyrev/> or orderd through The New York Review of Books, 1755 Broadway, 5th Floor, New York, NY 10019-3780, USA.

'Learning from the Gulf', March 7, 1991

'For a UN Volunteer Military Force', June 10, 1993

'Who Can Police the World', May 12, 1994

'Looking for the Sheriff', July 16, 1998

'How Not to Fight a Dictator', May 6, 1999

'The Making of a Scapegoat', August 12, 1999

'Mission Impossible', November 18, 1999

'In the Name of Humanity', April 27, 2000



Photo: Tommy Westberg

*Brian Urquhart laying a wreath
at the grave of Dag Hammarskjöld,
Uppsala Cemetery*

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UPPSALA UNIVERSITY

Uppsala University, founded in 1477, is the oldest and best-known university in Scandinavia. Famous scholars such as Rudbeck, Celsius and Linnaeus were professors at the university and from Uppsala the disciples of Linnaeus spread throughout the world. Seven Nobel Prize laureates have been professors at the university, among them Archbishop Nathan Söderblom, who was also the University's Pro-Chancellor and received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1930.

In the same year Dag Hammarskjöld completed his studies at Uppsala with a bachelor's degree in Law. He had begun his studies in 1923, received a BA in Romance Languages, Philosophy and Economics in 1925 and took a further post-graduate degree in Economics early in 1928.

In 1981, the Swedish Parliament established a Dag Hammarskjöld Chair of Peace and Conflict Research at Uppsala University. The university's international studies library is also named after Dag Hammarskjöld.

DAG HAMMARSKJÖLD FOUNDATION

The Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation was established in 1962 in memory of the second Secretary-General of the United Nations. The purpose of the Foundation is to organise seminars, workshops and consultations on social, political, cultural and environmental issues facing the Third World and to publish and disseminate the results. The Foundation is an operating and not a grant-making body which carries out its work programme under its own auspices.

Over the years, the Foundation has organised about 150 seminars and workshops and produced over 100 publications of material arising from these events, among them the biannual journal *Development Dialogue*.

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Copies of this publication may be obtained from the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, Övre Slottsgatan 2, S-753 10 Uppsala, Sweden, fax: +46-18-12 20 72, e-mail: secretariat@dhf.uu.se



The medal which Uppsala University has produced in memory of Dag Hammarskjöld is awarded to the Dag Hammarskjöld Lecturers. It is designed by Annette Rydström and cast in bronze. The obverse shows a portrait of Dag Hammarskjöld and the reverse a handshake and a text in Latin which reads: 'Uppsala University to its disciple in memory of his outstanding achievements.'

Photo: Jan Eve Olsson, Kungl. Myntkabinettet



DAG HAMMARSKJÖLD
FOUNDATION



UPPSALA UNIVERSITY

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